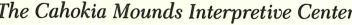
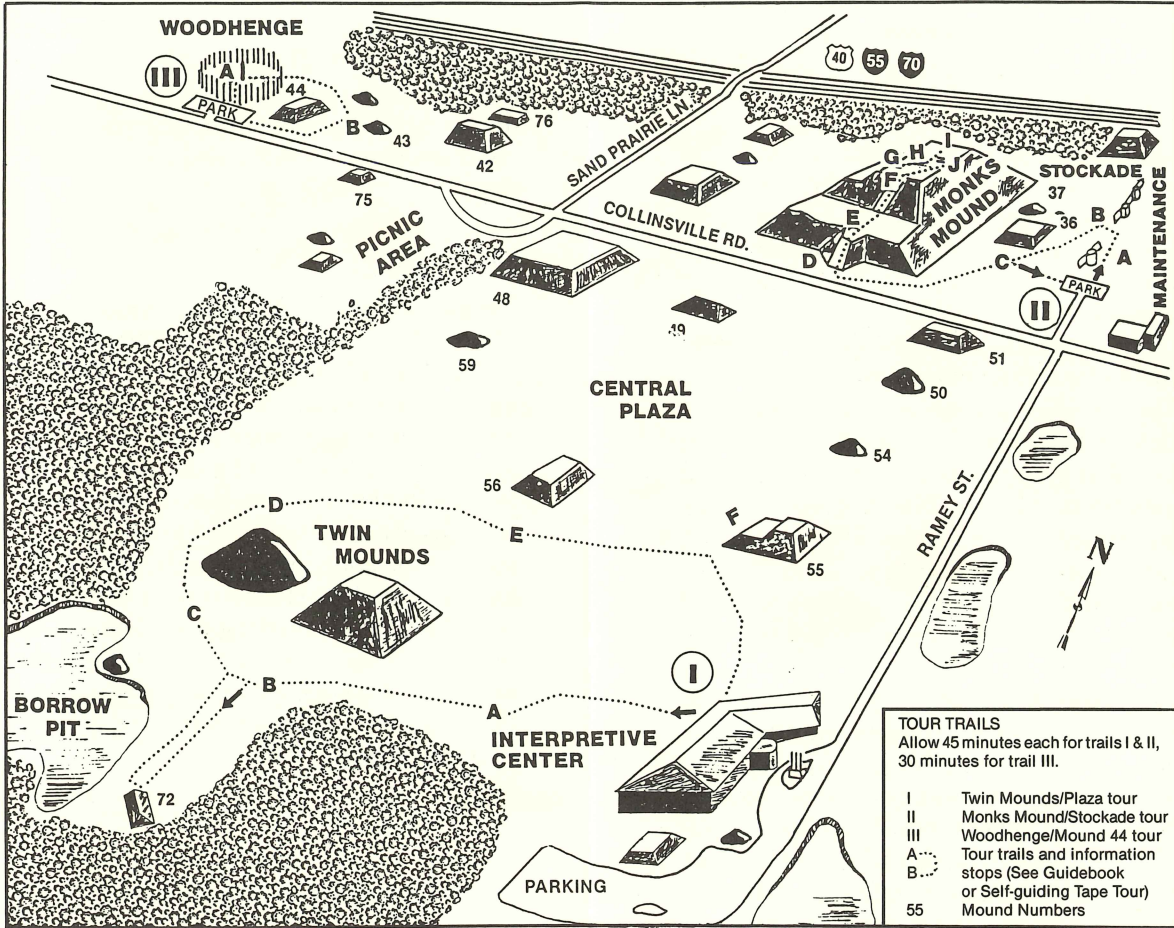


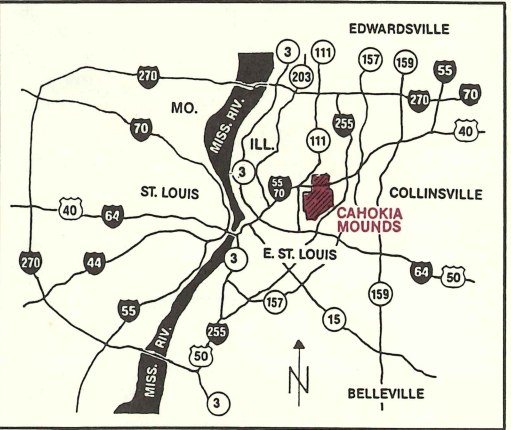
Archaeological excavations have partially uncovered remains of four, and possibly five, circular sun calendars that once consisted of large, evenly spaced log posts. Those calendars, called Woodhenges because of their functional similarity to Stonehenge in England, were probably used to determine the changing seasons and certain ceremonial periods important to an agricultural way of life. Constructed about 1000 A.D., they were an impressive example of Indian science and engineering.

Special programs are scheduled at Woodhenge for equinox and solstice sunrises; contact the site for specific dates and times.

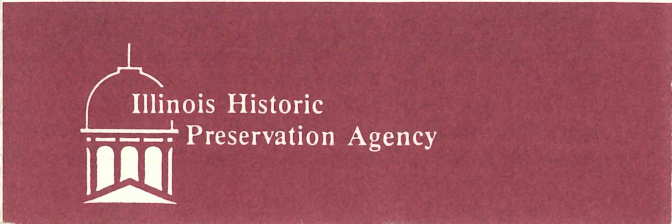
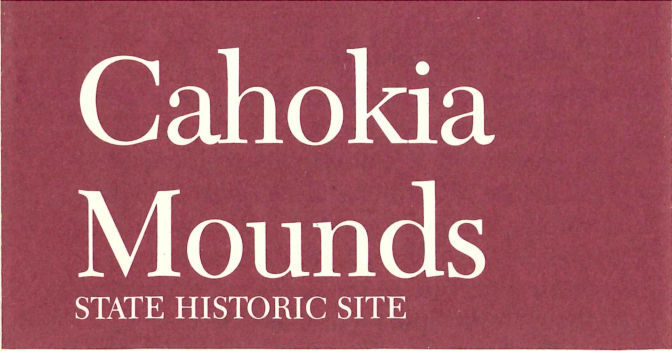


Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site is open daily from 8 A.M. to dusk. The Interpretive Center is open from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Both are closed on state holidays; contact the site for its schedule. Interpretive trails are marked, and special educational programs are available to groups. Picnic areas, playgrounds, and restrooms are available. The Interpretive Center and picnic facilities are handicapped accessible. Reservations may be made for picnic shelters. Groups of 25 or more must have a permit and be supervised by at least one responsible adult for each 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

For additional information, write Site Manager, Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street, Collinsville, Illinois 62234 (618) 346-5160



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Cahokia Mounds

The remains of the most sophisticated prehistoric Indian civilization north of Mexico are preserved at Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site. Within the 2,200-acre tract, located a few miles west of Collinsville, Illinois, lie the archaeological remnants of the central section of the ancient Indian city that is today known as Cahokia.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 1982, designated Cahokia Mounds a World Heritage Site for its importance to our understanding of the prehistory of North America. Cahokia Mounds is managed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Ancient Cahokia

According to archaeological finds, the city of Cahokia was inhabited from about 700 A.D. to 1500 A.D. At its peak, the city covered nearly six square miles and had a population of about 20,000 in extensive residential sections. Houses were arranged in rows around open plazas, and the main agricultural fields lay outside the city.



From the summit of Monks Mound, chiefs once looked across the broad central plaza to the Twin Mounds. Deceased nobles were prepared for burial in the temple atop the flat-topped mound for interment in the adjacent conical mound. Temples, homes of the elite, and burials were associated with more than 100 other manmade mounds. Houses with pole walls and grass-thatched roofs were clustered within and beyond the 15-foot-high stockade wall. (Photo: National Geographic Society)

The site is named for a subtribe of the Illini Indians—the Cahokia—who occupied the area when the French arrived in the late 1600s. What its ancient inhabitants called the city is unknown, since the city existed before European contact. Instead, archaeological investigations and scientific tests have provided what is known of the once-thriving Indian community.

The fate of the prehistoric Cahokians and their city is unknown. Depletion of resources probably contributed to the city's decline. A climate change after 1200 A.D. may have disrupted the crop production needed to sustain a large population. War, disease, and social unrest may also have taken their toll. A gradual decline in population began about 1300 A.D., and by 1500 A.D. the site had been abandoned.

The Indian Cultures

Cahokia Mounds was first inhabited about 700 A.D. by prehistoric Indians of the Late Woodland culture. Living in compact villages, they hunted, fished, gathered wild food plants, and cultivated gardens. They lived in pit houses—thatched huts with floors below ground level.

About 900 A.D. another culture emerged, called Mississippian (Woodland and Mississippian are names assigned by archaeologists; they are not tribal names). Those people developed an agricultural system with corn, sunflower, and squash as the principal cultivated crops. That stable food base, combined with hunting, fishing, and gathering wild food plants, enabled them to develop a very complex community with a highly specialized social, political, and religious organization. Cahokia became a regional center for the Mississippian culture, with satellite communities near the modern towns of Mitchell, Dupon, Lebanon, East St. Louis, and St. Louis. The Mississippians lived in “wall-trench” houses that probably had clay (daub) plastered walls and grass-thatched roofs, with floors in shallow basins or near ground level.

The Mounds

Originally there were over 120 mounds, but the locations of only 106 have been recorded. Many were altered or destroyed by modern farming and urban construction. About 68 are preserved in the historic site boundaries.

The mounds are made entirely of earth. The soil was dug with tools made of stone, wood, or shell, and transported on people's backs in baskets to the mound construction site. Most mounds show evidence of several construction stages. The digging left large depressions called borrow pits, which still can be seen in the area. It is estimated that over 50 million cubic feet of earth was moved by the Indians for mound construction alone.

Cahokians constructed three types of mounds. The most common was the platform mound, whose flat top served as a base for ceremonial buildings or residences of the elite. Two other types of mounds—conical and ridgetop—apparently were used for burials of important people or to mark important locations. The mounds were princi-

pally used for ceremonial activities; only a few were used for burials. Most Cahokians were probably buried in cemeteries, not in mounds.

Monks Mound

The great platform mound at Cahokia—Monks Mound—is the largest Indian mound north of Mexico and the largest prehistoric earthen construction in the New World. An estimated 22 million cubic feet of earth composes Monks Mound. It was built in several stages, mostly between 900 and 1200 A.D.

Monks Mound was named for the French Trappist monks who planted gardens and orchards on its terraces in the early 1800s. Monks Mound's base covers over 14 acres, and it rises in four terraces to a height of 100 feet. A massive building—105 feet long, 48 feet wide, and about 50 feet high—stood on the summit. There the principal ruler lived, conducted ceremonies, and governed the city.

Mound 72

Excavation of a small ridgetop mound — Mound 72 — revealed nearly 300 ceremonial and sacrificial burials, mostly of young women, in mass graves. The main burial appears to be a male ruler about 45 years of age, laid on a blanket of more than 20,000 marine shell disc beads. Near him were the remains of others sacrificed to serve him in the next life and a large cache of grave offerings. The skeletons of four men with their heads and hands missing were found near the largest sacrificial pit, which held the skeletons of 53 women between the ages of 15 and 25. Several other mass burials were also uncovered.